

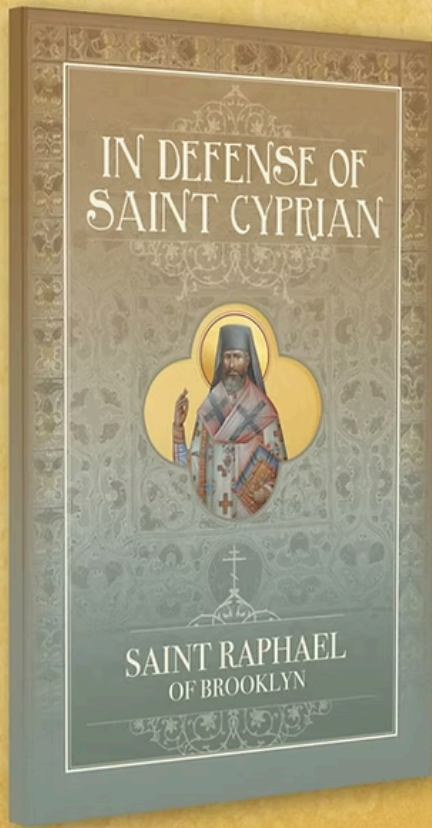
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The Orthodox Ethos Team

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St. Raphael of Brooklyn and His Stance Towards the Ecumenism of His Day

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Pastoral Direction and Instruction on Orthodox/Episcopal Relations and Ministrations in America [Issued in 1912]

Editor's Note: Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) of New York (ROCOR) once said, "Those ecumenists of Orthodox background are willing to undermine even the authority of the Ecumenical Councils in order to achieve communion with heretics." [1] If this is true of the Ecumenical Councils which consist of many of our Holy Fathers, then certainly no single saint in our Church is beyond being twisted towards such a devilish agenda. We already see this with St. Raphael, especially in regards to his early interaction and activities with the English Anglicans of the early 20th century. St. Raphael had briefly participated in the Anglican and Orthodox Churches Union Committee as its Vice President. During this time, he allowed his flock to occasionally be ministered to by Anglican clergy in times of emergency. However, the following Pastoral Direction demonstrates he eventually came to see that this was indeed a grave mistake, and that the Orthodox Christian faith was being jeopardized by participation in this Committee. When he realized the Anglican confession did not contain what has been handed down from the Apostles in the Orthodox faith, he repented of his initial stance toward the heterodox. In no uncertain terms, he concluded that those of heterodox confessions should have repentance and as their return to Holy Orthodoxy as their true goal. St. Raphael also concluded that the committee, which promoted "courtesy and friendship" between the two faiths, did not result in



repentance and return for the Anglicans and was not only a waste of time but was hurtful to the “religious and ecclesiastical welfare of the Holy Orthodox Church.” For us today, his words are cause for reflection regarding the multi-faith dialogues in which Orthodox hierarchs and clergy continue to participate.



Definition of Status of Anglican Communion and Strict Prohibition to All Orthodox the Acceptance of Protestant Ministrations of Any Sort is Still in Force in America, as Given by the Late Bishop Raphael of Brooklyn, First Orthodox Bishop Consecrated in This Country

“His Grace, the Right Reverend Raphael Hawaweeny, late Bishop of Brooklyn and head of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Catholic Mission of the Russian Church in North America, was a far-sighted leader. Called from Russia to New York in 1895, to assume charge of the growing Syrian parishes under the Russian jurisdiction over American Orthodoxy, he was elevated to the episcopate by order of the Holy Synod of Russia and was consecrated Bishop of Brooklyn and head of the Syrian Mission by Archbishop Tikhon and Bishop Innocent of Alaska on March 12, 1904. This was the first consecration of an Orthodox Catholic Bishop in the New World and Bishop Raphael was the first Orthodox prelate to spend his entire episcopate, from consecration to burial, in America. [Ed. note — In August 1988 the remains of Bishop Raphael along with those of Bishops Emmanuel and Sophronios and Fathers Moses Abouhider, Agapios Golam and Makarios Moore were transferred to the Antiochian Village in south-western Pennsylvania for re-burial. Bishop Raphael’s remains were found to be essentially incorrupt. As a result, a commission under the direction of Bishop Basil (Essey) of the Antiochian Archdiocese was appointed to gather materials concerning the possible glorification of Bishop Raphael.]

With his broad culture and international training and experience Bishop Raphael naturally had a keen interest in the universal Orthodox aspiration for Christian unity. His work in America, where his Syrian communities were widely scattered and sometimes very small and without the services of the Orthodox Church, gave him a

special interest in any movement which promised to provide a way by which acceptable and valid sacramental ministrations might be brought within the reach of isolated Orthodox people. It was, therefore, with real pleasure and gratitude that Bishop Raphael received habitual approaches of 'High Church' prelates and clergy of the Episcopal Church. Assured by 'catholic-minded' Protestants, seeking the recognition of real Catholic Bishops, that the Anglican Communion and Episcopal Church were really Catholic and almost the same as Orthodox, Bishop Raphael was filled with great happiness. A group of these 'High Episcopalian' Protestants had formed the American branch of 'The Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union' (since revised and now existing as 'The Anglican and Eastern Churches Association,' chiefly active in England, where it publishes a quarterly organ called *The Christian East*). This organization, being well pleased with the impression its members had made upon Bishop Raphael, elected him Vice-President of the Union. Bishop Raphael accepted, believing that he was associating himself with truly Catholic but unfortunately separated [from the Church] fellow priests and bishops in a movement that would promote Orthodoxy and true catholic unity at the same time.

As is their usual custom with all prelates and clergy of other bodies, the Episcopal bishop urged Bishop Raphael to recognize their Orders and accept for his people the sacramental ministrations of their Protestant clergy on a basis of equality with the Sacraments of the Orthodox Church administered by Orthodox priests. It was pointed out that the isolated and widely-scattered Orthodox who had no access to Orthodox priests or Sacraments could be easily reached by clergy of the Episcopal Church, who, they persuaded Bishop Raphael to believe, were priests and Orthodox in their doctrine and belief though separated in organization. In this pleasant delusion, but under carefully specified restrictions, Bishop Raphael issued in 1910 permission for his faithful, in emergencies and under necessity when an Orthodox priest and Sacraments were inaccessible, to ask the ministrations of Episcopal clergy and make comforting use of what these clergy could provide in the absence of Orthodox priests and Sacraments.

Being Vice-President of the Eastern Orthodox side of the Anglican and Orthodox Churches Union and having issued on Episcopal solicitation such a permission to his people, Bishop Raphael set himself to observe closely the reaction following his permissory letter and to study more carefully the Episcopal Church and Anglican teaching in the hope that the Anglicans might really be capable of becoming actually Orthodox. But the more closely he observed the general practice and the more deeply he studied the teaching and faith of the Episcopal Church, the more painfully shocked, disappointed, and disillusioned Bishop Raphael became. Furthermore, the very fact of his own position in the Anglican and Orthodox Union made the confusion and deception of Orthodox people the more certain and serious. The existence and cultivation of even friendship and mutual courtesy was pointed out as supporting the Episcopal claim to Orthodox sacramental recognition and intercommunion. Bishop Raphael found that his association with Episcopalians became the basis for a most insidious, injurious, and unwarranted propaganda in favor of the Episcopal Church among his parishes and faithful. Finally, after more than a year of constant and careful study and observation, Bishop Raphael felt that it was his duty to resign from the association of which he was Vice-President. In doing this he hoped that the end of his connection with the union would end also the Episcopal interferences and uncalled-for intrusions in the affairs and religious harmony of his people. His letter of resignation from the Anglican and Orthodox Churches Union, published in the *Russian Orthodox Messenger*, February 18, 1912, stated his convictions in the following way:

I have a personal opinion about the usefulness of the Union. Study has taught me that there is a vast difference between the doctrine, discipline, and even worship of the Holy Orthodox Church and those of the Anglican Communion; while on the other hand, experience has forced upon me the conviction that to promote courtesy and friendship, which seems to be the only aim of the Union at present, not only amounts to killing precious time, at best, but also is somewhat hurtful to the religious and ecclesiastical welfare of the Holy Orthodox Church in these United States.

Very many of the bishops of the Holy Orthodox Church at the present time — and especially myself — have observed that the Anglican Communion is associated with numerous Protestant bodies; many of whose doctrines and teachings, as well as practices, are condemned by the Holy Orthodox Church. I view union as only a pleasing dream. Indeed, it is impossible for the Holy Orthodox Church to receive — as She has a thousand times proclaimed, and as even the Papal See of Rome has declaimed to the Holy Orthodox Church's credit — anyone into Her Fold or into union with Her who does not accept Her Faith in full without any qualifications — the Faith which She claims is most surely Apostolic. I cannot see how She can unite, or the latter expect in the near future to unite with Her while the Anglican Communion holds so many Protestant tenets and doctrines, and also is so closely associated with the non-Catholic religions about her.

Finally, I am in perfect accord with the views expressed by His Grace, Archbishop Platon, in his address delivered this year before the Philadelphia Episcopalian Brotherhood, as to the impossibility of union under present circumstances.

One would suppose that the publication of such a letter in the official organ of the Russian Archdiocese would have ended the misleading and subversive propaganda of the Episcopalians among the Orthodox faithful. But the Episcopal members simply addressed a reply to Bishop Raphael in which they attempted to make him believe that the Episcopal Church was not Protestant and had adopted none of the errors held by Protestant bodies. For nearly another year Bishop Raphael watched and studied while the subversive Episcopal propaganda went on among his people on the basis of the letter of permission he had issued under a misapprehension of the nature and teaching of the Episcopal Church and its clergy. Seeing that there was no other means of protecting Orthodox faithful from being misled and deceived, Bishop Raphael finally issued, later in 1912, the following pastoral letter which has remained in force among the Orthodox of this jurisdiction in America ever since and has been confirmed and reinforced by the pronouncement of his successor, the present Archbishop Aftimios."^[2]

PASTORAL LETTER OF BISHOP RAPHAEL

“To My Beloved Clergy and Laity of the Syrian Greek-Orthodox Catholic Church in North America: Greetings in Christ Jesus, Our Incarnate Lord and God.

My Beloved Brethren:

Two years ago, while I was Vice-President and member of the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union, being moved with compassion for my children in the Holy Orthodox Faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3), scattered throughout the whole of North American and deprived of the ministrations of the Church; and especially in places far removed from the Orthodox centers; and being equally moved with a feeling that the Episcopalian (Anglican) Church possessed largely the Orthodox Faith, as many of the prominent clergy professed the same to me before I studied deeply their doctrinal authorities and their liturgy — the Book of Common Prayer — I wrote a letter as Bishop and Head of the Syrian Orthodox Mission in North America, giving permission, in which I said that in extreme cases, where no Orthodox priest could be called upon at short notice, the ministrations of the Episcopal (Anglican) clergy might be kindly requested. However, I was most explicit in defining when and how the ministrations should be accepted, and also what exceptions should be made. In writing that letter I hoped, on the one hand, to help my people spiritually, and, on the other hand, to open the way toward bringing the Anglicans into the communion of the Holy Orthodox Faith.

On hearing and in reading that my letter, perhaps unintentionally, was misconstrued by some of the Episcopalian (Anglican) clergy, I wrote a second letter in which I pointed out that my instructions and exceptions had been either overlooked or ignored by many, to wit:

- a) They (the Episcopalians) informed the Orthodox people that I recognized the Anglican Communion (Episcopal Church) as being united with the Holy Orthodox Church and their ministry, that is holy orders, as valid.
- b) The Episcopal (Anglican) clergy offered their ministrations even when my Orthodox clergy were residing in the same towns and parishes, as pastors.
- c) Episcopal clergy said that there was no need of the Orthodox people seeking the ministrations of their own Orthodox priests, for their (the Anglican) ministrations were all that were necessary.

I, therefore, felt bound by all the circumstances to make a thorough study of the Anglican Church's faith and orders, as well as of her discipline and ritual. After serious consideration I realized that it was my honest duty, as a member of the College of the Holy Orthodox Greek Apostolic Church, and head of the Syrian Mission in North America, to resign from the vice-presidency of and membership in the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union. At the same time, I set forth, in my letter of resignation, my reason for so doing.

I am convinced that the doctrinal teaching and practices, as well as the discipline, of the whole Anglican Church are unacceptable to the Holy Orthodox Church. I make this apology for the Anglicans whom as Christian gentlemen I greatly revere, that the loose teaching of a great many of the prominent Anglican theologians are so hazy in their definitions of truths, and so inclined toward pet heresies that it is hard to tell what they believe. The Anglican Church as a whole has not spoken authoritatively on her doctrine. Her Catholic-minded members can call out her doctrines from many views, but so nebulous is her pathway in the doctrinal world that those who would extend a hand of both Christian and ecclesiastical fellowship dare not, without distrust, grasp the hand of her theologians, for while many are Orthodox on some points, they are quite heterodox on others. I speak, of course, from the Holy Orthodox Eastern Catholic point of view. The Holy Orthodox Church has never perceptibly changed from Apostolic times, and, therefore, no one can go astray in finding out what She teaches. Like Her Lord and Master, though at times surrounded with human malaria — which He in His mercy pardons — She is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8) the mother and safe deposit of the truth as it is in Jesus (cf. Eph. 4:21).



The Orthodox Church differs absolutely with the Anglican Communion in reference to the number of Sacraments and in reference to the doctrinal explanation of the same. The Anglicans say in their Catechism concerning the Sacraments that there are 'two only as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.' I am well aware that, in their two books of homilies (which are not of a binding authority, for the books were prepared only in the Reign of Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth for priests who were not permitted to preach their own sermons in England during times both politically and ecclesiastically perilous), it says that there are 'five others commonly called Sacraments' (see homily in each book on the Sacraments), but long since they have repudiated in different portions of their Communion this very teaching and absolutely disavow such definitions in their 'Articles of Religion' which are bound up in their Book of Common Prayer or Liturgy as one of their authorities.

The Orthodox Church has ever taught that there are seven Sacraments. She plainly points out the fact that each of the seven has an outward and visible sign and an inward and spiritual Grace, and that they are of gospel and apostolic origin.

Again, the Orthodox Church has certain rites and practices associated and necessary in the administration of the Sacraments which neither time nor circumstances must set aside where the churches are organized. Yet the Anglicans entirely neglect these, though they once taught and practiced the same in more catholic days.

In the case of the administration of Holy Baptism it is the absolute rule of the Orthodox Church that the candidate must be immersed three times (once in the name of each Person of the Holy Trinity). Immersion is only permissory in the Anglican Communion, and pouring or sprinkling is the general custom. The Anglicans do not use holy oil in the administration, etc., and even in doctrinal teaching in reference to this Sacrament they differ.

As to the doctrine concerning Holy Communion the Anglican Communion has no settled view. The Orthodox Church teaches the doctrine of transubstantiation without going into any scientific or Roman Catholic explanation. The technical word which She uses for the sublime act of the priest by Christ's authority to consecrate is 'transmuting' (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). She, as I have said, offers no explanation, but She believes and confesses that Christ, the Son of the living God Who came into the world to save sinners, is of a truth in His 'all-pure Body' and 'precious Blood' (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom) objectively present, and to be worshiped in that Sacrament as He was on earth and is now in risen and glorified majesty in Heaven; and that 'the precious and holy and life-giving Body and Blood of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ are imparted' (to each soul that comes to that blessed Sacrament) 'Unto the remission of sins, and unto life everlasting' (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).

Confirmation or the laying on of hands, which the Orthodox Church calls a Sacrament — 'Chrismation' — in the Anglican Church is merely the laying on of hands of the Bishop accompanied by a set form of prayers, without the use of Holy Chrism, which has come down from Apostolic days as necessary.

Holy Matrimony is regarded by the Anglican Communion as only a sacred rite which, even performed by a Justice of the Peace, is regarded as sufficient in the sight of God and man.

Penance is practiced but rarely in the Anglican Communion, and Confession before the reception of Holy Communion is not compulsory. They have altogether set aside the Sacrament of Holy Unction, that is anointing the sick as commanded by Saint James (see James 5:14). In their priesthood they do not teach the true doctrine of the Grace of the Holy Orders. Indeed, they have two forms of words for ordination, namely, one which gives the power of absolution to the priest, and the alternative form without the words of Our Lord, whosoever sins ye remit, etc. (John 20:23). Thus, they leave every bishop to choose intention or non-intention in the act of ordination as to the power of Grace of their priesthood ('Ordination of Priests,' Book of Common Prayer). But, besides all of this, the Anglican Communion ignores the Orthodox Church's dogmas and teachings, such as the invocation of saints, prayers for the dead, special honor to the blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of God, and reverence for sacred relics, holy pictures and icons. They say of such teaching that it is 'a foul thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God' (Article of Religion, XXII).

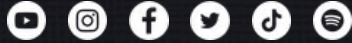
There is a striking variance between their wording of the Nicene Creed and that of the Holy Orthodox Church; but sadder still, it contains the heresy of the 'filioque.' I do not deem it necessary to mention all the striking differences between the Holy Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion in reference to the authority of holy tradition, the number of Ecumenical Councils, etc. Enough has already been said and pointed out to show that the Anglican Communion differs but little from all other Protestant bodies, and therefore, there cannot be an intercommunion until they return to the ancient Holy Orthodox Faith and practices, and reject Protestant omissions and commissions.

Therefore, as the official head of the Syrian Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church in North America and as one who must give account (Heb. 13:17) before the judgment seat of the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (I Pet. 2:25), that I have fed the flock of God (I Pet. 5:2), as I have been commissioned by the Holy Orthodox Church, and inasmuch as the Anglican Communion (Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA) does not differ in things vital to the well-being of the Holy Orthodox Church from some of the most errant Protestant sects, I direct all Orthodox people residing in any community not to seek or to accept the ministrations of the Sacraments and rites from any clergy excepting those of the Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church, for the Apostolic command that the Orthodox should not commune in ecclesiastical matters with those who are not of the same household of faith (Gal. 6:10), is clear: 'Any bishop, or presbyter or deacon who will pray with

heretics, let him be anathematized; and if he allows them as clergymen to perform any service, let him be deposed.’ (Apostolic Canon 45) ‘Any bishop, or presbyter who accepts Baptism or the Holy Sacrifice from heretics, we order such to be deposed, for what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?’ (Apostolic Canon 46)

As to the members of the Holy Orthodox Church living in areas beyond the reach of Orthodox clergy, I direct that the ancient custom of our Holy Church be observed, namely, in cases of extreme necessity, that is, danger of death, children may be baptized by some pious Orthodox layman, or even by the parent of the child, by

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Commending our clergy and laity until the safekeeping of Jesus Christ, and praying that the Holy Spirit may keep us all in the truth and extend the borders of the Holy Orthodox Faith, I remain.

Bishop of Brooklyn, Head of the Syrian

Your affectionate Servant in Christ,

+RAPHAEL

Greek Orthodox Catholic Mission in North
America

Accuracy of translation and fact of the above prescriptive direction and pastoral instruction being still in force and authority, unabated and unmodified, now and for all future time in this jurisdiction, certified April 27, 1927, by:

+AFTIMIOS,

Archbishop of Brooklyn,

First Vicar of the Russian American Jurisdiction,

Head of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Catholic Mission in North America

*Taken from "The Most Useful Knowledge for the Orthodox Russian-American Young
People," compiled by V. Rev. Peter G. Kobanik, 1932-34." [3]*

[1] Voznesensky, Metropolitan Philaret, "The Second Sorrowful Epistle", ROCOR Studies, accessed December 8, 2023, <https://www.rocorstudies.org/2019/03/04/a-second-sorrowful-epistle/>

[2] Holy Trinity Monastery, "Orthodox/Episcopal Relations and Ministrations in America [Issued in 1912]," *Orthodox Life*, no. 6 (November-December 1993): 22-26

[3] Holy Trinity Monastery, "Orthodox/Episcopal Relations and Ministrations in America [Issued in 1912]," *Orthodox Life*, no. 6 (November-December 1993): 27-32.